

**Surrealism** is such a strong presence today that it becomes important to try to define what surrealism is *not*: It is not mystical, metaphysical, or spiritually transcendent -- it originated historically in atheism and Darwinism and it frees us by provoking the nonmoral experience of an animal. We are animals in our dreams -- irrational, understanding nothing, reacting to everything. So it's natural for surrealist art to include fear, disgust, humor, eroticism, and the biological. Surrealism is not abstraction (it's juxtaposition). It may not even be esthetic. Surrealism is not expressionism -- it's *objective*. Surrealism is not literary or allegorical (it's poetic imagery). Surrealism is not Dadaist negation -- it has the optimism of the scientist, and the wonder of science fiction. It's a magical incantation. It's the triumph of ambiguity and mystery.

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REFERENCE SOURCE: *Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute* by Anna Balakian, 1959, 1970

**Xenogenesis:** Surrealism is xenogenic -- it makes things strange. It opens us up to the fundamental strangeness of our existence. If you really pay attention, all things are strange, all people are strangers. Dreams are strange, and surrealism merges dream and reality. To a pure animal, every moment of existence is strange. We need to experience this, *not* so we can transcend reality, but so we can be more *real*.

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